

Reviews

ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM

Diseases of the Joints and Rheumatism. A Book for Students and Practitioners. By Kenneth Stone, D.M., M.R.C.P. (Pp. 362; fully illustrated, 16 coloured plates. 30s.) London: William Heinemann Medical Books. 1947.

This well-produced and rather important book is hard to review. It is not a textbook, although it is labelled as such, for in parts the author is far too speculative; yet it is not a monograph designed to convey his ideas on certain aspects of a difficult subject, for he covers the whole field. Perhaps its keynote may be described as "academic." The first chapter on classification, for instance, is also an essay on etymology; and most of Book II comprises an ingenious but unorthodox hypothesis whereby the author shows that muscular rheumatism may be due to imbalance of the autonomic nervous system. In the last chapter he makes a determined effort to change the descriptive term "sciatica" to "Cotugno's disease" in honour of the eighteenth-century Neapolitan physician who first wrote on *nervous sciatica*.

The chapters on anatomy and pathology are among the best in the book, and those on "How to Examine Joints" and "Rest and Movement" are also welcome. The author gives a good account of rheumatoid arthritis in which his belief in its virus aetiology is manifest. However, he does not mention certain useful though possibly minor therapeutic measures such as transfusions and insulin, and omits reference to modern work on muscle biopsy in this condition. There is also no reference to the value or otherwise of intra-articular injection of lactic acid and kindred substances in the treatment of osteoarthritis, which he otherwise discusses fully. An excellent innovation is a chapter on painful joints in children, where he includes important discussions on tuberculosis, congenital deformities, syphilis, and haemophilia. He describes well spondylosis, spondylitis, and tuberculosis in a chapter on "Diseases of the Spine." When discussing gout, however, he does not show the same individual approach as in the previous chapters, and one gets the impression that he has taken less interest in this disease and its treatment. He considers fibrositis only in the penultimate chapter, which includes a paragraph on the important experimental type in animals reported by Mervyn Gordon to be caused by virus. In discussing fibrositic nodules he accepts the existence of those of fibrotic type such as were originally described by Stockman, as well as the possibility that localized muscle spasm may be responsible for other types. He does not mention recent work on those which have been found in association with the deep fibro-fatty tissues ("fatty hernia").

The historical introduction to each chapter is welcome and interesting, but it is noticeable that there are very few references to work published since 1942. It is also somewhat irritating to find that only about half the authors quoted are distinguished by initials. Throughout the book the descriptions applicable to the various categories of rheumatic diseases are adequate and clear, and there is a short but valuable chapter on chronic ligamentous strain; he includes there an account of the common postural defects of childhood which lead to so much trouble in later life. The illustrations are beautifully reproduced and the format of the book is pleasing.

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THE FIRST M.O.H.

Duncan of Liverpool. Being an Account of the Work of Dr. W. H. Duncan, Medical Officer of Health of Liverpool 1847-63. By W. M. Frazer, M.D., D.P.H. (Pp. 163; illustrated. 8s. 6d.) London: Hamish Hamilton Medical Books. 1947.

Dr. Duncan, as a general practitioner, saw Liverpool during its expansion to a prosperous port, when its population was swollen by thousands of labourers imported for dock construction. He liked little that he saw in his daily round of visitation. His patients lived in "court" houses, cellar dwellings, and overcrowded common lodging-houses wanting all but the most primitive sanitary arrangements and reached by narrow insanitary roads where sewers and scavenging were alike unknown. Their children were schooled in cellars.

Amidst appalling poverty, more appalling habits of living, and orgies of the basest description, with three-quarters of a million persons living per square mile in the worst parts of the town, with 40,000 of the total quarter-million persons in stagnant cellars and 55,000 in airless courts, he watched typhus and typhoid carry off thousands to the overcrowded cemeteries, where graves were emptied of their contents to make way for fresh arrivals.

This and much more Duncan told in outspoken addresses to the town council and the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool. He made his outstanding contribution in 1843 under the title of "The Physical Causes of the High Rate of Mortality in Liverpool," where he quoted Farr's mortality figures—for example, an infant mortality of 229 and an expectation of life, when averaged with Manchester, Leeds, and Bolton, of 19 years. There is little doubt that his fearless exposition of these horrible conditions did much to rouse the Liverpool citizens to a sense of danger and was largely responsible for the promotion of the private Bill (to become the Liverpool Sanitary Act, 1846) which preceded by two years the first great public health statute and created the first statutory post of medical officer of health. Duncan, then 42 years of age, almost as a matter of course filled this position, and his sixteen years of service are a model to all medical officers of health. An account of them shows how difficult must then have been the lot of the pioneer, forced to contend with circumstances probably worse than anything which could be imagined to-day, without staff other than his colleague the inspector of nuisances.

Virtually single-handed he strove to limit the disastrous cholera outbreaks which began in 1849, when over 5,000 people succumbed in the year. His explanation of the scourges and pestilences which ravaged his diocese was wrong by modern knowledge, for he blamed the vitiation of the atmosphere by poisonous emanations, and he had no understanding as we have to-day of the importance of personal hygiene. Yet his hypothesis was sufficiently near the truth to ensure success, and his efforts brought to what he had called "the most unhealthy town in England" the distinction of being a "leader and pioneer in the sphere of sanitation." All those interested in the pioneer efforts of this great humanitarian, whose strong sympathies for the downtrodden poor fathered the British public health service, should read Prof. Frazer's *Duncan of Liverpool*. It is a good book, entertaining to read, and most opportunely celebrating a notable centenary.

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SURGICAL PATHOLOGY

Surgical Pathology. By William Boyd, M.D., Dipl. Psychiat., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S. Sixth edition. (Pp. 858; 530 illustrations, including 22 colour figures. 50s.) Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Company. 1947.

"Surgical" pathology is of course not a science but only an arbitrary selection of those parts of pathology that a particular author considers to be of practical interest to surgeons. The selection of what is "surgical" from pathology in general is, like an anthology, essentially personal, temporary, and debatable, and all books on "surgical" pathology are therefore open to criticism on these grounds. Boyd's selection emphasizes gross and microscopical morbid anatomy, and contains adequate descriptions and illustrations of most of the lesions removed or explored by surgeons. To this extent his book will, like others of its kind, serve to make young surgeons more attentive to pathology and will help them to recognize most of the ordinary diseases that they encounter. Most of the 530 illustrations show plainly what is intended, though in only a few of the 22 coloured figures does the colour help our understanding. The photomicrographs are clear and their magnifications are given. The book is beautifully produced.

There are, however, some serious omissions. It contains nothing about toxæmia and its effects, fever, immunity, the general results of haemorrhage, the regeneration of blood, anhydremia, or the mechanism of oedema, all of which are pathological topics surely of fundamental interest to surgeons; and, while the author promises in the preface a chapter on surgical bacteriology and directions for the collection of pathological material, these promises are not fulfilled. The text